

This Week in Congress

October 24, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Where is the U.S. Beef in Japan?

After recently testifying in front of the House Ways and Means Committee on the importance of Japan reopening its border to U.S. beef, I am continuing to draw attention to this issue in Washington, D.C. This week I gave a speech to the U.S. House of Representatives about the economic harm U.S. farmers and ranchers are experiencing as a result of the Japanese embargo on American beef.

Though my efforts and that of my fellow Members of Congress are paying off, the process is still too slow. The patience of Kansans has worn thin. If no firm date is set by the Japanese Prion Committee that is currently reviewing this issue, I will continue moving forward to have my resolution brought to a vote. My resolution calls for economic sanctions to be used against Japan if it fails to abide by its October 2004 agreement to reopen its market to U.S. beef.

For the full text of the speech, please visit: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/sp101905JapanBeef.html

Discussing Health Information Technology with Former Speaker Gingrich

On Wednesday, I visited with former House Speaker Newt Gingrich about the need to transform today's health care into a 21st century, intelligent health system. Speaker Gingrich was at the Capitol speaking to Members of Congress about the need to implement health information technology, such as electronic health records and computer equipment to share these records between doctors' offices and hospitals. This technology will allow health care professionals to more efficiently and accurately document and treat patients' conditions. Health care costs continue to rise, and advances like health information technology hold great promise for improving efficiency and lowering costs.

While we work to drive down the costs of health care, we must ensure that programs already in place continue their coverage. The House is currently working on reforming Medicaid. Some of the current reform proposals are detrimental to smaller, more rural pharmacies. Therefore, I recently sent a letter to my colleagues in the House, urging them to support reforms in Medicaid payments to pharmacies that will save money without adversely affecting rural pharmacies. I believe there are better ways to achieve savings, and I am encouraging my colleagues to carefully examine and support alternatives such as providing incentives to increase electronic prescribing and generic drug use.

Recognizing Kansas Efforts in Fighting Domestic Violence

In recognition of October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I recognized Kansas efforts in a speech to the House of Representatives this week. The tragedy of domestic violence is close to home. In the speech, I recognized the life of Patty Kruse-Hicks from my hometown of Plainville who died a victim of domestic violence. I also highlighted the work of Studio 2B, a Girl Scout troop in Emporia, for their yearlong project focusing on issues surrounding domestic violence and the legal system.

I commend those who work every day to help victims of domestic violence, especially those who work in the nine service centers in the First District - Dodge City, Emporia, Garden City, Hays, Hutchinson, Liberal, Salina and Ulysses. Through education, funding and support, we will continue working together to break the cycle of domestic violence and bring hope to victims affected by these terrible acts.

For the full text of the speech, please visit: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/_ks01_moran/sp101705DomesticViolence.html

Visiting Kansas Students Serving at the U.S. Naval Academy

Early Monday morning before the House of Representatives began its work for the week, I visited the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, for a tour of the grounds and to meet with young Kansans I nominated to serve at the academy. The highlight of the trip was celebrating the 220th anniversary of the U.S. Navy and the 160th anniversary of the U.S. Naval Academy at a lunch in King Hall, the 55,000 square foot dining area where the entire brigade eats together.

Dining with me was Captain Bruce Estes Grooms, the Commandant of the Naval Academy, and Kansas midshipmen Brenton Kolb of Dodge City, Abby Maxwell of Salina, Kevin Meier of Garden City, Samuel Lehner of Junction City, Nathaniel Swank of Holcomb, Nathan Penka of Garden City, Wayne Gantz of Phillipsburg and Shanta Makona of Kansas City.

The nomination of students like these to our service academies is one of the greatest honors I

have as a Congressman. It gives me great pleasure to help young men and women pursue their goals, and I am very proud of these young people as they have accepted the challenge of learning to be strong leaders. With their roots in our Kansas traditions and values, I know they will lead by example and serve our country well.

House Works to Protect Kansas Gun Dealers from Lawsuits

This week I supported House passage of the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which protects the makers and sellers of firearms and ammunition from frivolous lawsuits. The Senate passed this legislation on July 29, so it now goes to the President to be signed into law.

I do not believe that lawful firearms manufacturers and dealers should be held responsible for the criminal actions of those who misuse their products. Over the past several years, predatory lawsuits against the firearms industry have threatened to bankrupt companies and deny Americans their constitutional right to bear arms.

The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act limits lawsuit liability for the gun industry in cases where third parties commit criminal or unlawful acts. While still permitting legitimate legal action against the firearms industry, this legislation will help limit irresponsible lawsuits.

Visiting Rural Kansas Businesses in Central Kansas

I visited businesses in Downs and Beloit at the end of the week. In Downs, I stopped at Brush Art Graphics, a family-owned business that does marketing and advertising for such large accounts as the Caterpillar Corporation. This company is utilizing technology to keep jobs in Kansas. It is talented people and businesses like this that help rural America flourish.

Following up with what I learned in New Orleans last week at port facilities and during discussions on grain exports and Mississippi river traffic, I visited several north central Kansas agriculture businesses to see how Kansas grain transportation is going. I spent time at Scoular Grain Company in Downs and Ag Mark and Farmway Coop in Beloit. At these stops, we discussed the consequences of the recent hurricanes on grain movement in Kansas, as well as grain prices and ethanol.

I have been working with Scoular Grain Company to secure funding for an alternate truck route in Downs. This project will improve safety by rerouting heavy truck traffic away from a school zone and the main business district to the grain facility in the middle of town. I also stopped at the Mitchell County Natural Resources Conservation and Farm Service Agency office in Beloit.

Meeting with High School Students, Teachers and Administrators in Osborne

I visited Osborne High School Friday to see what is going on in our schools. While there, I talked with students, teachers and administrators about current education issues. I spoke to about 30 seniors about current issues facing our nation and opportunities for them to serve as interns in my Washington, D.C., and district offices. It is always good to touch base with Kansas teachers, the people who know best how federal education policies directly affect Kansas students.

In the Office

In my office this week from Kansas City were Dr. Roy Jensen, Dr. Marci Nielsen and Sheri Dunbar to discuss the Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute. Terry Tomlinson of Lenexa was in to talk about using agriculture products for biochemicals. Kansas State University representatives Sue Peterson, Assistant to the President and Director of Government Relations; and Chuck Reagan, Associate to the President, were in to discuss airport improvements at K-State Salina. John Armbrust of Manhattan and Jerry Carson and Mike McReynolds of Parsons were in to talk about the Base Realignment and Closure process and the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant.

This week I also met with representatives from the Kansas City Army Corps of Engineers about several ongoing projects in Kansas, including increased building activity at Ft. Riley and cleanup at the Salina Airport Authority. The Ft. Riley expansion due to the brigade moving from Germany is expected to increase construction significantly in the area and the Corps of Engineers will be working with local and national architectural and construction companies to complete this work. I also expressed concerns about environmental cleanup of contaminants located at Salina Municipal Airport, the former location of Schilling Air Force Base. It is critical that this cleanup occur and the government fulfill its responsibility to the residents of Salina. Representatives included Mike Rossi, Steve Iverson, David Combs and Larry Myers.

In representing the Kansas Association of Public Employees was Brian Thompson of Topeka to talk about budget issues. Kansas Livestock Association Senior Vice President Mike Beam of Topeka was in to discuss the Japanese embargo on U.S. beef. Dr. Rick Kellerman of Wichita stopped by my office to say hello, as did Mike Murray and Judy Gadd with Sprint. Also coming by my office was Jameson Jones of Salina. Jameson is currently in law school at Stanford University.

In my office this week for a tour of the Capitol building was a group of nearly 30 with the North American Millers Association. Thomas and Barbara Kice of Wichita were in with the group. Also in were Jay Brown of Hutchinson and Jo Anne Beezley of Pittsburg.

Very truly yours,

Jerry